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R I C H B U C K L E R ' S
SECRETS
OF
DRAWING
COMICS



Number 1

INTRODUCTION by STAN LEE

Show me a person who never wanted to be a comicbook artist and I'll show you someone from another planet! As far back as I can remember I wanted to draw comics. In fact, in grade school I used to create my own homemade strips by doodling little stick figures with panels around them, in every empty space I could find in my notebooks. I don't know if those sketches helped me get a feeling for comics, but they certainly helped me get into trouble with my teachers.

But now, before we discuss this book, let's make sure we know what a comicbook artist really is.

It probably won't surprise you to learn that comicbook art and the art of motion pictures have a lot in common. The professional comicbook artist does far more than draw enough pictures to fill up the pages of a story. He must train himself to think like a camera. Every time he composes a panel he's faced with choices similar to those of the movie cameraman. Should he draw a long-shot or a close-up? Should his characters be viewed from the reader's eye-level, or from above, or below? What should be seen in the panel, and what would be better omitted? Well, you get the idea.

In short, the point I want to emphasize is, a comicbook artist is so much more than a person who merely draws skillfully. He (or she, of course) must have the eye of a cinematographer, the soul of an actor, the precision of a director, the story sense of a writer and the dedication of a monk.

Now, having said all that, let me add that there are few people better qualified to write this book than Rich Buckler. From the time he drew his first strip for Marvel Comics I've been one of his biggest fans and boosters; and when you see Rich's artwork on the pages that follow, you'll know why.

Considering how many millions of comicbook fans there are throughout the free world,

and considering how many people would genuinely love to be able to draw comics, it has always amazed me that there are so few books exclusively devoted to this subject. Oh, there are many books that tell you how to draw and how to paint, as well as books about anatomy, perspective and layout. But there are woefully few instruction books dealing with the fascinating and totally unique art of comicbook illustration itself. So of Rich hasn't merely written a

how to book, he's virtually performed a heroic public service!

I believe that my own book, **HOW TO DRAW COMICS THE MARVEL WAY**, which I co-authored with artist John Buscema, was the first such title ever devoted exclusively to the art of comicbook illustration. Published in 1977 by Simon and Shuster, it's still a worldwide best seller and is presently in its umpteenth printing. This just serves to further illustrate the incredible, ever-growing interest in comicbook art.

So, welcome to Rich Buckler and his book, a book cleverly constructed, handsomely illustrated and interestingly written. A book so skillfully crafted that both the professional illustrator and the fledgling beginner alike are sure to enjoy it and profit by it. A book that will, I hope, lead to many more such books of this type, books that can help and encourage the aspiring comicstrip creator as he marches along on the road to success.

Now let's lift our pencils, pens and paint brushes in hearty tribute to all the talented comicbook artists whose drawings bring such pleasure and excitement to countless millions of readers throughout the world.

Today, you're reading how they do it. Tomorrow,

you many be doing it yourself!

Excelsior!



Stan Lee

RICH BUCKLER'S SECRETS OF DRAWING COMICS

Writer/Artist: **Rich Buckler**

Letters: **John Holowski**

Editors: **Brian Moore & Don Chin**

Cover: **Rich Buckler**

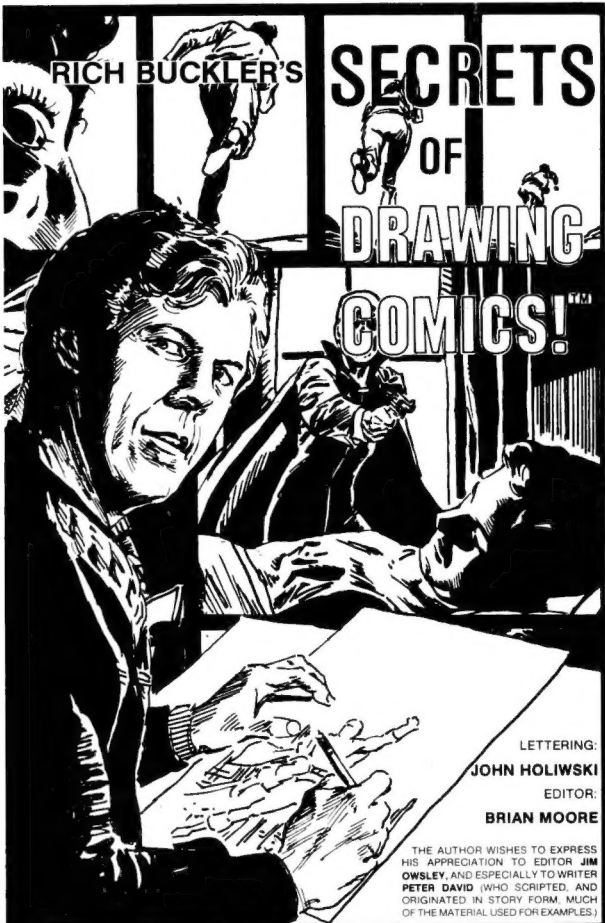
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RICH BUCKLER'S

SECRETS OF DRAWING COMICS!

LETTERING:
JOHN HOLIWSKI

EDITOR:
BRIAN MOORE

THE AUTHOR WISHES TO EXPRESS
HIS APPRECIATION TO EDITOR **JIM
OWSLEY**, AND ESPECIALLY TO WRITER
PETER DAVID (WHO SCRIPTED, AND
ORIGINATED IN STORY FORM, MUCH
OF THE MATERIAL USED FOR EXAMPLES.)

1 STORY TELLING:



IN COMICS ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN (AND USUALLY DOES!) AN ARMORED MAN, CARRYING A LIGHTNING BOLT, AND RIDING A FLYING HORSE... CHASING AN AIRLINER AT 30,000 FT. IN THE *REAL* WORLD WHO WOULD BELIEVE IT? THE IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENS ALL THE TIME IN COMIC BOOK STORIES. IF THE WRITER CAN THINK OF IT, YOU, AS THE ARTIST, MUST THINK OF A WAY TO MAKE IT WORK *VISUALLY*.

LET'S ASSUME THE WRITER HAS DONE HIS JOB. HE HAS SUPPLIED YOU WITH A DETAILED STORY PLOT WITH FULLY FLESHED OUT CHARACTERS AND PAGE-BY-PAGE DESCRIPTIONS OF SCENES. WHAT NOW? THIS IS WHERE IT GETS CHALLENGING! IF THE WRITER IS GOOD, HE DIDN'T THROW LOGIC OUT THE WINDOW, AND NEITHER SHOULD YOU! WHAT THE SCRIPT WRITER RENDERS BELIEVABLE IN *WORDS*, *YOU* HAVE TO SHOW IN *PICTURES*. OFTEN HIS DESCRIPTIONS LEAVE SOMETHING TO BE DESIRED, BUT HE CAN'T ANTICIPATE EVERYTHING. I'VE SEEN A LOT OF GOOD STORIES RUINED BY BAD ARTWORK. I'VE ALSO READ PLENTY OF BAD STORIES THAT WERE "PUT OVER" BY GOOD ARTWORK. IN THE LATTER CASE, THE ARTIST'S TREATMENT OF THE STORY ADDED *CREDIBILITY*.

CREDIBILITY IS MAKING THE READER BELIEVE. TO A COMIC BOOK READER, SEEING IS BELIEVING. YOU CAN TELL HIM ABOUT IT IN WORDS, BALLOONS OR CAPTIONS -- BUT IT WON'T BE BELIEVED UNLESS IT'S IN THE PICTURES YOU DRAW. STORYTELLING IS THE "HOW TO" OF "SAYING IT" IN PICTURES. WHILE THERE ARE NO HARD AND FAST RULES, THERE ARE BASIC PRINCIPLES YOU MUST LEARN (A SORT OF "VISUAL GRAMMAR") TO OBTAIN A GOOD COMMAND OF THE LANGUAGE OF STORYTELLING.



COMICS STORYTELLING IS MUCH MORE THAN SIMPLY PUTTING PICTURES TO A WRITER'S DESCRIPTIONS. IF THAT WERE ALL YOU COULD DO, YOU COULD BECOME A COMMERCIAL ILLUSTRATOR (AND I'M NOT PUTTING **DOWN** ILLUSTRATORS) **BUT** YOU WOULD BE A FLOP IN COMICS! A COMIC BOOK IS MADE UP OF PAGES, AND THESE PAGES ARE COMPRISED OF UNITS CALLED PANELS. EACH PANEL IS A BORDERED ILLUSTRATION WHICH CONTAINS VISUAL INFORMATION THAT CONVEYS THE STORY. THESE ARE NOT SELF-CONTAINED VISUAL STATEMENTS. ON THE CONTRARY, A COMIC BOOK PANEL (WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS) RELATES TO THE PANEL **BEFORE** AND **AFTER** IT. THE LOGICAL ARRANGEMENT OF THESE UNITS FORMS A LARGER UNIT CALLED A SEQUENCE. SEQUENCES CAN BE AS BRIEF AS TWO OR THREE PANELS OR THEY CAN STRETCH OUT INTO SEVERAL PAGES (DEPENDING ON HOW LONG THE SCENE "PLAYS").

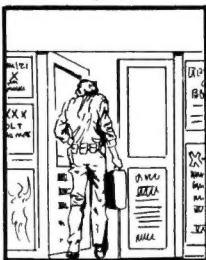


IN COMIC BOOKS, YOU BELIEVE A MAN CAN FLY--BUT NOT BECAUSE THE WRITER TOLD YOU SO!

YOUR JOB AS ARTIST IS TO **SHOW IN PICTURES** EVERYTHING THAT THE WRITER CANNOT COMMUNICATE IN WORDS. IN THE REAL WORLD, SEEING IS BELIEVING--AND SO IT IS IN COMICS. YOUR PICTURES MUST BE CONVINCING. WHEN YOU "STAGE" YOUR SCENE, YOU MUST TAKE CARE TO MAKE EVERYTHING YOU SHOW THE READER HAVE THE APPEARANCE THAT IT CAN ACTUALLY HAPPEN. I SAY "APPEARANCE" BECAUSE THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT HAPPEN IN COMICS THAT ARE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE IN THE REAL WORLD--YET, THESE OCCURRENCES **SHOULD** BE LOGICAL WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STORY YOU ARE TELLING. TO USE AN OLD SAW, "A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS". IF, SAY, YOU WANT TO SHOW A MAN IN A COSTUME AND CAPE FLYING IN THE AIR ON HIS OWN POWER, AND YOUR RENDITION OF THIS MIRACULOUS FEAT DOESN'T **APPEAR** TO BE POSSIBLE (OR YOU DIDN'T SHOW IT **CLEARLY** ENOUGH), YOU'RE IN TROUBLE. NO AMOUNT OF WORDS CAN CONVINCE THE READER THAT IT IS HAPPENING **IF IT DOESN'T "HAPPEN" IN THE ART!** YOU CAN'T FAKE IT IN PICTURES. THE READER WILL REJECT THE STORY (AND THEN YOU'RE IN **REAL** TROUBLE)!

ACTION IS MOVEMENT:

COMICS ARE A LOT LIKE MOVIES--AND AT THE SAME TIME, A LOT **DIFFERENT!** IN COMIC BOOKS, THERE ARE CAMERA ANGLES, SCENES, SHOTS, ETC.-- BUT THERE IS NO **ACTUAL** CAMERA, AND EVERY PICTURE (OR PANEL) IS A VISUAL APPROXIMATION. THE ARTIST MUST "BECOME" THE CAMERA. HE IS ALSO THE DIRECTOR, THE ACTORS, THE PROP PERSON, SET DESIGNER, THE-- WELL, I THINK YOU GET THE IDEA. THE COMIC ARTIST'S JOB IS A TOUGH ONE. TO BE A COMIC BOOK ARTIST, YOU MUST NOT ONLY BE ABLE TO DRAW WELL (AND QUICKLY) BUT IT IS UP TO YOU TO KNOW HOW TO CREATE-- IN A TWO-DIMENSIONAL MEDIUM--AN ENTIRE "WORLD" IN WHICH CHARACTERS MOVE. THEN YOU MUST BRING YOUR CHARACTERS TO LIFE, "DIRECT" THEIR "PERFORMANCES", AND SOMEHOW CONVINCE THE READER SOMETHING WONDERFUL, DRAMATIC AND ENTERTAINING IS UNFOLDING-- ALL OF THIS FOR APPROXIMATELY 20 PAGES--PHEW!



THE REPAIRMAN LEAVES HIS VAN-- WE CUT TO THE OUTSIDE DOORWAY AS HE OPENS THE DOOR IN FRONT OF HIM, THEN-- CUT TO A MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT OF HIM WALKING IN. WE NEVER SEE THE "IN-BETWEEN" ACTIONS THAT LINK UP THESE SHOTS-- YET THE READER ACCEPTS WHAT IS SEEN AS CONTINUOUS ACTION.

IT WOULD APPEAR TO BE A LOT SIMPLER, BECAUSE THE IMAGE ON THE SCREEN ACTUALLY MOVES. COMICS DON'T HAVE THAT ADVANTAGE (AS I'M SURE YOU'VE NOTICED). YET, IN COMICS THE ACTION DOES HAPPEN AND THE CHARACTERS DO "MOVE"-- NOT IN ACTUALITY, BUT BECAUSE THE STORY HAPPENS INSIDE THE READER'S HEAD, IT **SEEMS** LIKE THEY MOVE.

MOTION LINES:

YOU CAN AUGMENT THE IMPLIED MOVEMENTS OF YOUR CHARACTERS WITH "**MOTION LINES**".

I DON'T THINK ANYONE HAS YET CATEGORIZED AND DEFINED THIS MUCH USED CARTOON "SPECIAL EFFECT", PROBABLY BECAUSE MOST PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS EMPLOY THEM INSTINCTIVELY. READERS TAKE THIS EFFECT FOR GRANTED (WHEN IT IS USED CORRECTLY). EACH PATTERN YOU USE ACTUALLY CREATES A DIFFERENT EFFECT. SOME LINES INDICATE TREMENDOUS SPEED, WHILE OTHERS ARC OR ZIG-ZAG OR SEEM TO GO FAST-SLOW-FAST, ETC. THERE ARE ALMOST ENDLESS PERMUTATIONS.



FIG. 1
HERE WE SEE EXAMPLES WHERE THE "MOTION LINES" DO MOST OF THE WORK. IN "A", THE EFFECT OF THE MAN BEING PULLED IS CONVINCING. IN "B" AND "C" THE "MOTION LINES" MAKE THE VILLAIN'S MOVEMENTS FASTER, MORE VIOLENT.



FIG. 2
OUR HERO DELIVERS A TEETH-SHATTERING BLOW TO THE BAD GUY. THE MOTION LINES SHOWS US BOTH THE STARTING POINT AND THE FOLLOW-THROUGH. THE "BURST LINES" AROUND THE BAD GUY INDICATE THE IMPACT (SEE ALSO ABOVE).

MOTION LINES ARE AN INVALUABLE AID TO THE ARTIST, ALLOWING HIM TO ENLIVEN AND THEREBY HEIGHTEN BOTH THE ACTION AND THE DRAMA. THEY CAN, HOWEVER, BE OVERUSED. NEVER RELY SOLELY ON THIS DEVICE TO CARRY YOUR ACTION. THE "ACTING" OF YOUR CHARACTERS (POISE, BALANCE, COORDINATION, GESTURES) SHOULD ALWAYS BE CONVINCING. REMEMBER THAT THE LINES ARE **NOT REALLY THERE**. THEY ARE A SORT OF **AFTER-IMAGE** OF WHATEVER IT IS YOU ARE SETTING INTO MOTION, AND SHOULD SERVE TO CLARIFY ACTION.

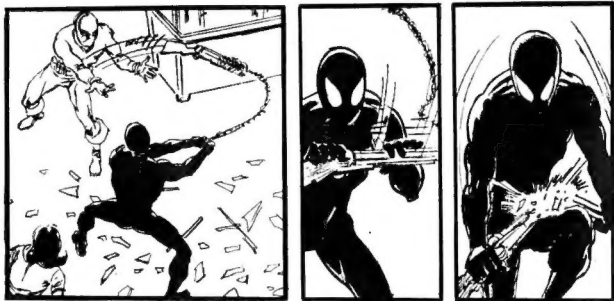
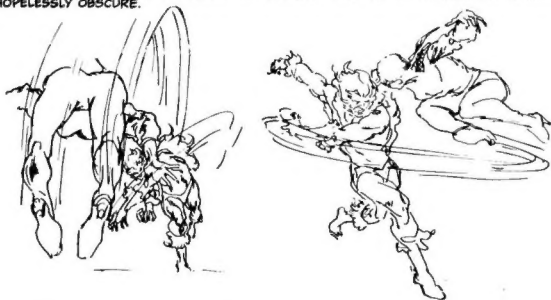


FIG. 3
THIS WAS A TRICKY SEQUENCE TO DRAW. TWO KINDS OF MOTION LINES--AND WITHOUT "MOTION LINES" TO DIRECT THE READER'S EYE, THE ACTION WOULD HAVE BEEN HOPELESSLY OBSCURE.



MORE EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT MOTION LINES. TRY OUT A FEW--EXPERIMENT. REMEMBER: **MOTION LINES ALWAYS CLARIFY ACTION!**

DRAMATURGY: (WHERE THE REAL ACTION IS)

LIKE A FILM DIRECTOR, *YOU* WILL DETERMINE HOW YOUR CHARACTERS LOOK AND ACT. HOW YOU MAKE A SCENE "PLAY" DEPENDS ON A NUMBER OF FACTORS: STORY PACING (MANIPULATING THE "READING TIME" OF YOUR PAGES), LAYOUT (WHICH INCLUDES BLOCKING OUT THE ACTION, SETTING THE SCENE), MOOD (THE USE OF LIGHT AND SHADOW) THE "ACTING" OF YOUR CHARACTERS, SELECTION OF "CAMERA ANGLES", AND JUXTAPOSITION OF PANELS. EACH OF THESE PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART IN YOUR MANIPULATION OF YOUR READERS' RESPONSES (BOTH EMOTIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL), AND *THAT IS WHAT STORYTELLING IS ALL ABOUT!*



BACKGROUNDS ARE IMPORTANT! USED PROPERLY, PERSPECTIVE AND BACKGROUND SHAPES AND PATTERNS CAN LIVEN UP THE ACTION BY DRAMATIZING MOTION. IN THESE EXAMPLES, MOVEMENT IS CREATED *WITHOUT* THE USE OF "MOTION LINES".

CAMERA ANGLES:



THE "CAMERA" IS THE ARTIST'S EYE WHICH SELECTS WHAT THE AUDIENCE SEES--AND WITH CAMERA ANGLES DETERMINES HOW THE AUDIENCE PERCEIVES.

COMIC PANELS SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED ILLUSTRATIONS, BUT RATHER **COMPONENTS OF THE PAGE**. EACH SCENE, EACH SEQUENCE IS A COMPONENT OF THE ENTIRE STORY. IF WE AGAIN MAKE A COMPARISON WITH FILM YOU WILL SEE MORE CLEARLY WHAT I'M GETTING AT. MOVIES ARE INDIVIDUAL SHOTS OF VARYING LENGTH, EDITED TOGETHER, WITH EACH SHOT AFFECTING THE ONE BEFORE AND AFTER IT.

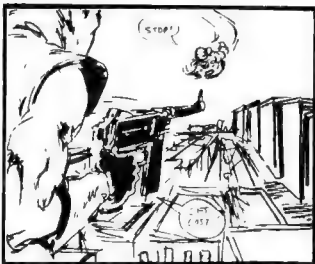


THE COMIC BOOK PAGE IS A MONTAGE OF INDIVIDUAL SHOTS (PANELS) "EDITED" TOGETHER TO FORM A GRAPHIC UNIT--ACTUALLY, THEY ARE "PRE-EDITED" BY THE ARTIST AS HE MAKES HIS SELECTION IN THE LAYOUT STAGE.

DECIDING **WHERE** TO PLACE YOUR "CAMERA" IN EACH SHOT SHOULD **NEVER BE ARBITRARY**. CAMERA ANGLES PROVIDE **NARRATIVE FOCUS** FOR THE ARTIST--AND CAMERA ANGLES ARE CREATED WHEN YOU POSITION YOUR "CAMERA". FOR EXAMPLE, A WORMS-EYE VIEW OF A STANDING SUBJECT MAKES THAT PERSON APPEAR TALL AND DOMINEERING. A DOWN SHOT ACCOMPLISHES THE REVERSE AND DIMINISHES THE SAME PERSON.



POV (POINT OF VIEW) SHOTS ARE USED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS: (1) TO CREATE SUSPENSE, (2) ALTER THE VIEWPOINT OF THE READER TO BRING HIM CLOSER TO A CHARACTER'S THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS, AND (3) SHARPEN NARRATIVE FOCUS TO MAKE THE ACTION SUBJECTIVE.



OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE CAMERA:

POV SHOTS CAN BE OVER-THE-SHOULDER OF ONE CHARACTER, FOCUSING ON A PERSON OR ACTION IN THE BACKGROUND. "INSERT" PANELS SHOW WHAT A CHARACTER SEES. IN EACH CASE, THE "CAMERA" IS SUBJECTIVE (OR PERSONALIZED). IN OTHER WORDS, THE "CAMERA" IDENTIFIES THE READER WITH THE CHARACTER WHOSE POINT OF VIEW IS FEATURED. WHEN YOUR CAMERA IS **OBJECTIVE**, IT IS CONCERNED ONLY WITH THE REALITY OF THE ACTION AND IS WITHOUT BIAS OR PREJUDICE -- WHICH IS THE **OPPOSITE** OF **SUBJECTIVE**. THE COMICS ARTIST USES BOTH OF THESE TECHNIQUES WHEN HE PLACES HIS "CAMERA" TO CREATE CAMERA ANGLES.

CONTINUITY:

CONTINUITY IS ESSENTIAL TO COMIC BOOK LAYOUT. WITHOUT IT, YOUR STORYTELLING WILL BE FRAGMENTED, CONFUSED, INCOHERENT.

CONTINUITY IS THE "**CONNECTEDNESS**" OF YOUR SHOTS (TO COIN A PHRASE). GOOD CONTINUITY IS A CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENT OF GOOD STORYTELLING. BAD CONTINUITY MAKES BAD STORYTELLING. IN FILM, THE SHOTS ARE EDITED INTO SEQUENCES THAT FORM AN UNBROKEN, COHERENT WHOLE. AS IN FILM, SO IN COMICS. YOUR SHOTS MUST MATCH UP PROPERLY--WHEN THEY DON'T, IT'S BECAUSE YOU INADVERTENTLY MISINFORMED THE READER.

A FREQUENT MISTAKE BY BEGINNERS IS TO **CROSS THE IMAGINARY 180° LINE**. FOR THOSE WHO MIGHT NOT EVEN **KNOW** ABOUT IT, SUCH A TRANSGRESSION IS **FORGIVEABLE**, --BUT I HAVE SEEN IT DONE IN COMICS, BY PROFESSIONALS, **WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION**. IF THE LINE IS CROSSED, THE "CAMERA" POINT OF VIEW IS USUALLY ALTERED DRASTICALLY AND THE RESULT DISORIENTS THE VIEWER.



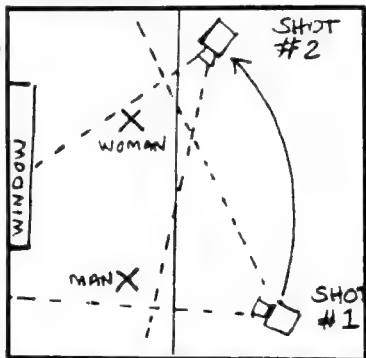
DON'T DO THIS!

AT FIRST SIGHT, THIS SEQUENCE LOOKS LIKE A STANDARD TWO SHOT FOLLOWED BY A REVERSE ANGLE OF THE SAME SHOT. WHAT REALLY HAPPENED WAS THAT THE ARTIST ALLOWED HIS "CAMERA" TO CROSS THE 180° LINE.

THE 180° LINE:

"CAMERA" ANGLE CHANGES EVERY TIME YOUR "CAMERA" IS MOVED. IT IS NECESSARY FOR THE COMICS ARTIST TO KNOW WHEN TO CHANGE ANGLES, AND HOW. WITH PRACTICE YOU WILL LEARN TO ANTICIPATE WHAT THE IMAGE WILL LOOK LIKE-- **BEFORE** YOU DRAW IT!

I HAVE READ COMICS STORIES WHERE THE CHARACTERS SEEMED TO BE JUMPING AROUND FROM PLACE TO PLACE, WITH BACKGROUNDS SUDDENLY APPEARING AND DISAPPEARING FOR NO APPARENT REASON. THIS HAPPENED BECAUSE THE ARTIST HAD NO IDEA WHERE HIS "CAMERA" WAS PLACED IN ANY OF THE SHOTS.



YOUR "CAMERA" IS NOT ALWAYS STATIONARY. IN THIS SEQUENCE THE ANGLE IS REVERSED BY MOVING THE "CAMERA"-- WHICH IN THIS INSTANCE ALTERS THE POINT OF VIEW FROM THE MAN TO THE WOMAN. BECAUSE THE 180° LINE IS OBSERVED HERE, THE MAN STILL APPEARS AT PANEL LEFT AND THE WOMAN AT PANEL RIGHT.

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE:

FOR STORYTELLING PURPOSES, "CAMERA" ANGLES ARE THE COMICS ARTIST'S *PHILOSOPHY*. NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IS *HOW TO USE YOUR "CAMERA"* TO TELL THE STORY. THE COMICS ARTIST IS THE CAMERA--AND WHERE *YOU* ARE DETERMINES WHERE THE *READER* WILL BE AS YOUR STORY VISUALLY UNFOLDS BEFORE HIM.



BEFORE YOU DRAW ANYTHING, YOU MUST FIRST DECIDE WHAT TO SHOW, THEN FIGURE OUT HOW TO SHOW IT CLEARLY. VERY OFTEN WHAT YOU CHOOSE TO *LEAVE OUT* IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS *WHAT YOU PUT IN*.

IN THE ABOVE EXAMPLE, I LEFT OUT ALL THE DETAILS OF THE ROOM EXCEPT WHAT IS ESSENTIAL:

ANY EXTRANEIOUS DETAIL WOULD HAVE DISTRACTED THE READER, TAKING AWAY FROM THE ACTION. NOTE HOW THE PANELS "LINK" TOGETHER. ALWAYS GIVE ENOUGH VISUAL INFORMATION SO THAT AN "ILLUSION" OF MOVEMENT IS ACHIEVED. WHAT MAKES THIS SCENE "PLAY" IS THE SUSPENSE (WHICH IS BUILT UP BY CAREFULLY MANIPULATING *WHAT* THE READER SEES AND *WHEN*).

YOU ARE THE CAMERA:

I HAVE ALREADY SAID THAT THE COMICS ARTIST *IS* THE CAMERA. IN FILM IT IS THE DIRECTOR WHO ALWAYS CHOOSES WHERE TO PLACE THE CAMERA, KNOWING THAT ***EACH CAMERA ANGLE ALTERS THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE VIEWER.*** I EMPLOY A "CINEMATIC" APPROACH TO COMICS STORYTELLING, SO MOST OF THE TERMS I WILL BE USING ARE FILMMAKING TERMS. YOU, AS THE "DIRECTOR" MUST LEARN HOW TO USE YOUR IMAGINARY CAMERA TO TELL A STORY EFFECTIVELY. TO DO THIS, IT BECOMES NECESSARY TO LEARN TO READ COMICS DIFFERENTLY THAN WHAT YOU ARE USED TO. OBSERVE THE WAY THE ARTIST USED HIS "CAMERA", HOW HE SET UP HIS SHOTS AND LAID OUT HIS PAGE. WAS THE ACTION CLEAR AND EASY TO FOLLOW? DID THE SCENE "PLAY" (THAT IS, WAS THE ACTING DRAMATIC, CONVINCING)? WAS HIS STORY PACING SLOW? OR, WAS IT HEAD-OVER-HEELS, NON-STOP ACTION? HOW WAS THE "ACTING"? STUDY AND EVALUATE. WAS THERE ANYTHING HE DID THAT YOU WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY?



CLOSE UPS ARE USED TO PUNCTUATE. THEY ARE **VISUAL EXCLAMATION POINTS**. THERE ARE USUALLY ONE OR TWO CLOSE-UPS ON NEARLY EVERY COMIC PAGE.



LONG SHOT. YOU PULL YOUR CAMERA BACK TO CAPTURE ALL THE ACTION IN ONE SHOT. THE LONG SHOT CAN ALSO BE USED AT THE BEGINNING OF A SCENE TO ESTABLISH LOCATION.



ESTABLISHING SHOT:

BOTH OF THESE PANELS ESTABLISH LOCATION. IN THE FIRST ONE WE SEE ONLY LOCATION--THE WORD BALLOONS INDICATE WHERE THE CHARACTERS ARE.

THE SECOND PANEL IS A **MEDIUM-CLOSE** ESTABLISHING SHOT (ACTUALLY A "MAGNIFIED" PORTION OF THE FIRST PANEL).



MEDIUM SHOT:

THIS IS BETWEEN A **LONG SHOT** AND A **CLOSE SHOT**. IT ALLOWS YOU ROOM TO SHOW **SIMULTANEOUS ACTION** (SOMETHING HAPPENING IN BOTH THE FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND CONCURRENTLY). BACKGROUND ACTION CAN BE USED TO COMMENT ON YOUR MAIN ACTION (FOREGROUND), OR VICE VER A. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU POSITION EVERYTHING CAREFULLY (AVOID CLUTTER). REMEMBER THAT IN COMICS, THE "CAMERA" **BRINGS EVERYTHING INTO FOCUS**. "TONING" DOWN ELEMENTS IN THE FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND IS DONE WITH SHADOWS AND LATER IN THE COLORING (PLAN AHEAD FOR THIS!)



EXTREME CLOSE-UP:

THIS SHOT IS ALMOST A "SPECIAL EFFECT". IN A DIALOGUE SCENE, IT CAN BE USED TO "GO INTO" A CHARACTER'S THOUGHTS--OR, USE IT WHEN THE WRITER IS LAYING SOME HEAVY-DUTY DIALOGUE ON THE READER. THE EYES ARE THE MOST EXPRESSIVE OF HUMAN FEATURES. THIS SHOT IS ALWAYS AN ATTENTION-GETTER, BUT USE IT SPARINGLY. SINCE IT IS SO STYLIZED, IT *CAN* "BACKFIRE" ON YOU AND DISTRACT FROM THE REST OF A SCENE IF IT ISN'T USED APPROPRIATELY.



2 SHOTS AND 3 SHOTS

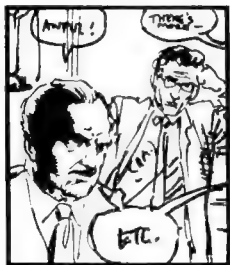
DIALOGUE SCENES DON'T HAVE TO BE STATIC. IMAGINATIVE USE OF "CAMERA" ANGLES "AND CHANGES IN POINT OF VIEW CAN LIVEN UP THE ACTION. NOTE THE MOVEMENT OF THE MAN WITH THE GLASSES. HE ACTUALLY FOLDS HIS ARMS "IN-BETWEEN" PANELS AS THE "CAMERA"

MOVES IN FOR A CLOSER LOOK. THE THIRD MAN (IN BACKGROUND) DROPS OUT OF SIGHT (ACTUALLY, HE IS *OFF PANEL*).



MEDIUM THREE-SHOT (OR GROUPSHOT)

IN THIS SHOT, BOTH THE "CAMERA" AND THE CHARACTERS HAVE MOVED. THE DIALOGUE HELPS CONNECT BOTH PANELS, SO THAT THE THIRD MAN (AGENT) DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE POPPING OUT OF NOWHERE. DIALOGUE CAN HELP PROVIDE MOTIVATION FOR THE GESTURES OF YOUR ACTION.



MEDIUM LONG SHOT:

IN THIS PANEL THE BACKGROUND DOMINATES. MOST OF THE PICTURE IS IN SILHOUETTE, AND DETAILS ARE MINIMIZED. THE IDEA IS SIMPLE AND DIRECT.

CLOSE-SHOT (NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH CLOSE-UP):

THIS **TWO-SHOT** IS ACTUALLY A CLOSE-UP VERSION OF A THREE-SHOT THAT PRECEDED IT. THE THIRD MAN SPEAKS FROM OFF PANEL.



SILHOUETTE:

YOU CAN USE THIS EFFECT TO BUILD TENSION IN A SCENE. BE SURE TO CLEARLY ESTABLISH YOUR CHARACTERS FIRST. NEVER CHANGE YOUR LIGHT SOURCE IN THE MIDDLE OF A SCENE (UNLESS IT IS **MOTIVATED**—SAY, SOMEONE SWITCHES ON A LIGHT IN A DARKENED ROOM). ONCE YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED YOUR LIGHT SOURCE, YOU'RE **STUCK** WITH IT.—SO PLAN AHEAD!



MEDIUM SHOT POV:

POV IS POINT OF VIEW. IN THIS CASE, PEOPLE TALKING ARE VIEWED FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE UNIFORM COP AND DETECTIVE AT FOREGROUND LEFT.



THESE ARE VARIATIONS OF THE **OVER-THE-SHOULDER SHOT**—THROUGH THE LEGS, AND UNDER THE SHOULDER. IN EACH CASE, THE PICTURE IN THE FOREGROUND DOMINATES THE PERSON IN THE BACKGROUND.





THIS SEQUENCE WAS DESIGNED TO PULL THE READER UP CLOSE, AND THEREBY *INTENSIFY THE EMOTION* OF THE WOMAN.

SHE IS ABOUT TO BE ATTACKED BY A RUTHLESS MURDERER. I COULD HAVE HAD HER SCREAM HYSTERICALLY AND FAINT DEAD AWAY. INSTEAD, I AVOIDED CLICHE AND HAD HER CONFRONT HER ADVERSARY (AND THE READER) WITH AN ALMOST VALIANT DEFIANCE OF HER IMPENDING DEATH.

TENSION WAS BUILT BY "*ZOOMING IN*" WITH MY "CAMERA". WHAT I WAS TRYING FOR WAS THE FEELING OF AN OLD-FASHIONED WESTERN SHOWDOWN, TO IDENTIFY WITH HER FEELINGS. AND THIS TECHNIQUE SHIFTS THE POINT OF VIEW. WHAT GOES THROUGH HER MIND IN THOSE FEW BRIEF MOMENTS GIVE ADDED DEPTH TO HER CHARACTER (SO THAT THE READER CAN IDENTIFY WITH HER AND HER PREDICAMENT).

CAMERA ANGLES:



WHENEVER POSSIBLE, "CAMERA" ANGLES SHOULD BE MOTIVATED-- "CAMERA" PLACEMENT IS, IN A SENSE, WHERE THE **READER** IS PLACED (LOOKING OVER SOMEONE'S SHOULDER, STANDING BEHIND SOMEONE, LOOKING DOWN ON TO THE STREET FROM A WINDOW, ETC.). NEVER PUT YOUR "CAMERA" WHERE THE READER WOULD FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO BE (FOR INSTANCE, INSIDE OF A LIGHTED FIREPLACE OR ON THE CEILING HANGING FROM A LIGHTING FIXTURE).

CLOSE-UP INSERT:

IN MOVIES, AN **INSERT** IS A SHOT THAT IS PUT "IN BETWEEN" TWO OTHER SHOTS TO SHOW THE VIEWER NEW OR IMPORTANT ACTION IN CLOSE-UP. IN COMICS, THE TECHNIQUE IS THE SAME--BUT A WORD OF CAUTION: WHEN YOU USE AN INSERT, USUALLY IT **SLOWS DOWN** THE PACING OF A SCENE (WHICH WAS OKAY BY ME WHEN I USED THE TWO EXAMPLES ON THE RIGHT. THE FIRST ONE ILLUSTRATED A PLOT POINT AND THE SECOND WAS ADDED TO BUILD SUSPENSE).



CAMERA ANGLES:



DOWNSHOT
("CAMERA" AT HIGH ANGLE).



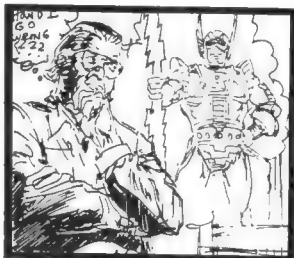
UPSHOT
("CAMERA" AT LOW ANGLE).

MONTAGE:



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SYMBOLIC MONTAGES CAN INCORPORATE TWO OR MORE EVENTS THAT ARE HAPPENING SIMULTANEOUSLY, OR AT DIFFERENT TIMES--AND ARE USED TO **COMPRESS TIME** AS KIND OF A VISUAL SUMMARY. BORDERS ARE USUALLY OMITTED. THE PICTURES ARE THEN RELATED AND REINFORCED BY WRITTEN NARRATIVE.



STORY PACING:

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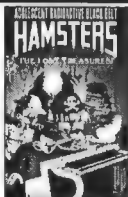
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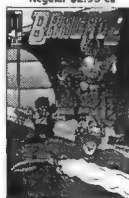
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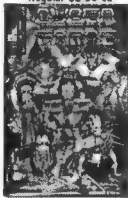
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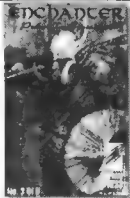
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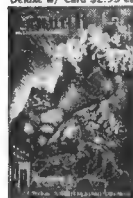
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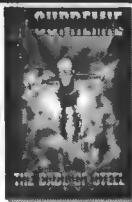
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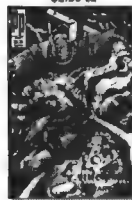
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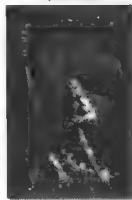
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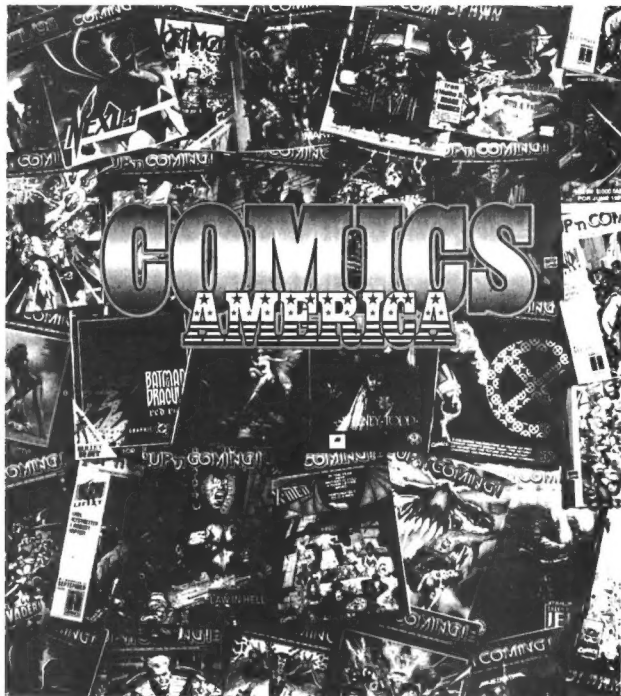


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